



JOHN D. KAPLAN
... flees north

Post 9/21/71 Mexican Police Ask FBI To Arrest U.S. Jailbreaker

From News Dispatches

MEXICO CITY, Aug. 20—

Mexican police today asked the U.S. Federal Bureau of Investigation to arrest a 42-year-old New York murder convict who escaped aboard a helicopter from a federal penitentiary Wednesday night.

Joel David Kaplan, who his defense attorney said was an agent of the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA), and Carlos Antonio Contreras Castro, a Venezuelan counterfeiter, fled the maximum security in one of the most spectacular escapes in Mexico prison annals.

The attorney general's office said one of the two escapes, presumably Kaplan, was flown to Brownsville, Tex., and Sausalito, Calif., after transferring from the helicopter to a Cessano single-engine about 300 miles north-east of Mexico City.

The office said it believed that Contreras Castro had

flown in a second Cessana to Guatemala.

It said both Cessanas had been rented in Phoenix, Ariz., and that the helicopter had been rented from Natrola Service, Inc., of Casper, Wyo. A report said the helicopter was found abandoned last night near La Pesca.

The helicopter, painted in the blue and white colors of the Mexican attorney general's office, swooped into the yard of the Santa Maria Acatitla Prison near Mexico City and plucked the two to freedom.

Mexican police identified the pilot of the helicopter as Roger Guy Herschner of Glendora, Calif.

The attorney general's office also requested the cooperation of national police in Central America in the search for the two escapees.

Police also sought a man and a woman seen in a car

whose lights lit the airfield where they switched to the light plane.

Kaplan was serving a 28-year sentence for the premeditated murder of Luis M. Vidal in 1961. Contreras Castro, 35, of Tarachi, Venezuela, Kaplan's cellmate, was serving nine years for counterfeiting and forgery.

Victory Velázquez, Kaplan's defense attorney, said that he never doubted that his client was a CIA agent, who had come to Mexico in 1961 on a secret mission. Kaplan entered Mexico with a false British passport in 1961, police said.

The J. M. Kaplan Fund of New York, of which Kaplan's uncle, J. M. Kaplan, is the president, has been identified as a CIA conduit by Congressional investigators.